

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR ZEV YAROSLAVSKY

7/15/03

During the past 30 years, cable television has become an increasingly significant part of the overall media mix available to consumers. As over-the-air commercial TV channels curtail their own news and public affairs commitment, dedicated cable channels for public-access, educational and governmental (PEG) programs have stepped into the breach and are rapidly becoming a vitally important source of information about local government and civic life.

Through an arrangement with KLCS, a channel licensed to the Los Angeles Unified School District, the County of Los Angeles currently buys time to broadcast the weekly Board of Supervisors meetings. This arrangement is inadequate, however, because we are unable to broadcast the meetings live; meetings of the Board are not televised until 10:00 pm the day after they take place. This time delay is inconvenient for viewers, limits our audience and reduces the public’s ability to obtain information and otherwise participate in the County decision-making process.

In addition, there are many County services and programs available to constituents that are worthy of publicizing via cable television, ranging from social service eligibility and tax and permit assistance to recreational opportunities and cultural

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activities.

The County of Los Angeles would benefit greatly from uniform Countywide dedicated channels for public access, educational and governmental programming. As a local franchising authority the County is entitled to require that cable operators make channels available for these purposes when granting or renewing their franchise operating agreements. However, we are hampered by the fact that we only have franchising authority over the various disconnected pockets of unincorporated areas in which only about 10% of County constituents reside. While we have begun the process of requiring our own cable franchisees to set aside PEG channels serving these areas, we have no control over franchises in incorporated cities where the other 90% of County residents live.

However, because most cities already require their cable franchisees to set aside multiple channels for PEG purposes, many channels are potentially available for County use. I believe that we should take advantage of this opportunity to expand the County presence on our regional cable systems, and formally request that all cities require such channels as part of new or renewal cable franchise agreements, and further, that they partner with the County of Los Angeles in opening a governmental channel for County use.

As part of this franchise renewal process, the City of Los Angeles is now undertaking a "needs assessment" survey to ascertain what programming services city officials and local communities want to be incorporated in the franchise renewals. I believe that dedicating a channel for County-related programming and public-service information should be a top priority.

**I, THEREFORE MOVE THAT** the Board of Supervisors send a five-signature letter to the City of Los Angeles and the County's other 87 cities officially requesting them to include a provision requiring such a dedicated County channel in all new and renewal cable-franchise agreements.

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